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ABSTRACT

College students reported memorable social studies activities that they had experienced in kindergarten through grade eight by describing both the activities themselves and what they learned from those activities. These memories were coded for subject matter, type of activity, and learning outcomes. The responses reflected the influence of the expanding communities curriculum when viewed across grade levels, but with more history and fewer sociology/communities memories than expected. Learning outcomes ratings varied by activity types, being least favorable for repetitive, low level seatwork and most favorable for activities that involved opportunities for experiential learning or higher order applications. Contains 14 references and 12 tables. (Author/SG)

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COLLEGE STUDENTS' REPORTS OF LEARNING ACTIVITIES EXPERIENCED IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES[1]

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SO 023 411

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Abstract

College students reported memorable social studies activities that they had experienced in Grades K-8 by describing both the activities themselves and what they learned from those activities. These memories were coded for subject matter, type of activity, and learning outcomes. The responses reflected the influence of the expanding communities curriculum when viewed across grade levels, but with more history and fewer sociology/communities memories than expected. Learning outcomes ratings varied by activity types, being least favorable for repetitive, low-level seatwork and most favorable for activities that involved opportunities for experiential learning or higher-order applications.

This article presents findings from the Memorable Activities Study, the most recent in a series of investigations into the role of learning activities in social studies curriculum and instruction. The study was conducted to determine what preservice teachers (college seniors in education) remembered as powerful social studies activities and what they said they learned from these activities as they reflected on their elementary and middle school (or junior high) years.

This line of work began with publication of a research synthesis and position paper (Brophy & Alleman, 1991) that reviewed theory and research on learning activities in education, with special emphasis on social studies. Reflecting ideas developed from synthesis of the scholarly literature and study of the activities recommended in elementary social studies series, this article offered principles that curriculum designers and teachers could use in designing or selecting, implementing, and assessing learning activities. In subsequent publications we have elaborated on these principles (Brophy & Alleman, 1992), used them as the basis for analyzing all of the activities suggested in the teacher's manual and provided in the workbook that accompanied a first-grade social studies text (Alleman & Brophy, 1992), and applied them in the process of critiquing activities intended as methods of integrating social studies with other school subjects (Alleman & Brophy, in press). In the present article, we use these principles as the basis for interpreting relationships observed between the nature of the learning activities that the students remembered and the quality of the learning that they reported experiencing as a result of those activities.

We view activities, not as ends in themselves, but as means of accomplishing more fundamental curricular purposes and goals. Consequently, we assume that the potential value of an activity needs to be assessed with reference to

these purposes and goals. Activities produce their effects primarily by engaging students with important ideas, not merely by engaging them in physical activity per se. Therefore, we view activities as opportunities for students to thoughtfully process, integrate, and apply curricular content.

By "activities," we mean anything that students are expected to do, beyond getting input through reading or listening, in order to learn, practice, apply, evaluate, or in any other way respond to curricular content. Activities may call for speech (answer questions or participate in discussion, debate, or role play), writing (short answers, longer compositions, research reports), or goal-directed action (conduct inquiry, solve problems, construct models or displays). This conception of activities is broader than the concepts of academic work as defined by Doyle (1986) or academic task as used by several investigators (cf. Mergendoller, 1988) because it includes discourse that does not lead to a particular product and work that is not graded. What activities have in common is that they are intended, at least ostensibly, as means of enabling students to accomplish curricular goals, and students are expected to engage in them for that purpose.

The Brophy and Alleman (1991) theoretical piece articulated five sets of principles for designing, selecting, implementing, and evaluating activities: (a) primary principles (necessary criteria) that must apply to each individual activity included in a curriculum unit, (b) secondary principles that identify additional features of individual activities that are desirable but not absolutely necessary, (c) principles, such as variety, that do not apply to individual activities but can be applied to clusters of activities considered as sets, (d) alternative principles (which have been advocated by others) that we do not endorse, and (e) principles that apply to the teacher's implementation

of activities. In interpreting the findings of the Memorable Activities Study, we rely primarily on the four primary principles:

> Goal relevance: Activities must be useful means of accomplishing worthwhile curricular goals, phrased in terms of target capabilities or dispositions to be developed in the students. Each activity's primary goal must be an important one, worth stressing and spending time on. This implies that the activity is built around powerful ideas that are basic to accomplishment of the overall goals of the curriculum.
>
> Appropriate level of difficulty: Each activity must be pitched within the optimal range of difficulty--difficult enough to provide some challenge and extend learning but not so difficult as to leave many students confused or frustrated.
>
> Feasibility: Each activity must be feasible for implementation within the constraints under which the teacher must work (space and equipment, time, types of students, etc.).
>
> Cost effectiveness: The social education benefits expected to be derived from the activity must justify its anticipated costs (for both teacher and students) in time and trouble.

Our theoretical ideas imply predictions about the comparative effectiveness of different learning activities that might be used in teaching social studies. For example, they imply that activities built around powerful concepts or generalizations are more likely to produce significant learning outcomes than activities built around minor or even trite content, and that activities that include opportunities for students to engage in critical thinking and decision making are more likely to produce significant learning outcomes than activities that are confined to the memorizing of disconnected facts or the isolated practice of skills. Activities involving role enactments or construction of models or other products might or might not be expected to produce significant learning outcomes, depending on the degree to which they are based on important ideas (e.g., reenactments of the first Thanksgiving that are based on information about the background of the Pilgrims, the hardships they had endured, and their reasons for wanting to give thanks, not just on what sorts of clothes they wore and what they ate at the meal), as well as the degree to

which the implementation of the activity emphasizes these ideas (so that they do not fade into the background as students become absorbed in constructing costumes, preparing foods, etc.).

As an application and indirect test of our ideas, we asked undergraduate teacher education students to tell us about the social studies activities they remembered from their elementary school years and to state what they believed they learned from engaging in those activities. We wondered about what kinds of activities the students would remember, about the kinds of learning they would report, and about other qualitative aspects of the responses. Would they just remember the details of the activities, or would they also report powerful understandings as learning outcomes? Would the kinds of activities described as powerful in our theoretical analyses be remembered more vividly and be associated with more powerful learning outcomes than the kinds of activities that we consider less valuable? Would certain activities yield noteworthy positive or negative affective responses? Would there be systematic differences in patterns of responses across grade levels or types of respondents? We analyzed the data with these questions in mind, along with their potential implications for social studies teaching and teacher education.

We focused on memories from the elementary grades (K-8) because research on social studies curriculum and instruction typically reveals a much broader range of activities in use at these grades. Compared to high school teachers, elementary teachers are more likely to use small groups and independent work assignments and to integrate social studies into other daily activities. Also, more of them employ widely advocated but seldom used activities such as discussion, role play, and debate (Cuban, 1991; Stodolsky, 1988; Thornton, 1991).

Asking preservice teacher education majors about what they remember from their social studies classes apparently is a frequently used method of stimulating prior knowledge in the process of launching social studies methods courses. Two methods textbooks (Naylor & Diem, 1987; Woolever & Scott, 1988) incorporate this technique and include information about common responses. This information is listed informally rather than presented in tables containing numbers or percentages, but it fits well with the data to be reported here. Besides providing formal data on such memories, this article extends the analysis by looking not only at what students remembered doing in K-8 social studies, but also at the learning that they described as resulting from those activities.

The focus on learning is needed because curriculum developers and teachers often cite salience in students' memories as justification for their activity selections ("Students may not remember the everyday stuff taught in regular lessons, but they all remember our reenactment of the first Thanksgiving."). In the absence of information about what students learned from these memorable activities, such justifications are incomplete. They retain their power if students report learnings that reflect major social studies goals, but they become questionable if students remember the activities only because they were fun or if they report undesirable learning outcomes (e.g., stereotyped or otherwise inaccurate perceptions of Native Americans acquired through participation in First Thanksgiving recreations).

Procedures

Data were collected from five senior-level social studies methods classes, using free-response questionnaires distributed during the first session and collected at the second session. Participation was voluntary and anonymous,

although the students were asked to identify themselves according to gender, academic major (elementary education or special education), and the grade level at which they intended to teach. Responses were received from 111 students, representing 82 percent of the total enrollment.

The response sheet was entitled "Memorable Social Studies Activity Study." Under this title were the following instructions: "Please spend some time thinking and reflecting on your past experiences in social studies. Identify at least three activities that you have very strong memories about and explain in detail what you learned." Under these general instructions were spaces for responding at each of three grade levels: K-3, 4-6, and 7-8. In each section, the left side of the page included the heading "Powerful/ Memorable Activity" and the instructions "Make sure that you identify specific activities, not just topics or content." The right side of the page included the heading "Explanation of what you learned" and the instructions "Be specific and detailed about what you learned, i.e., don't just say 'I learned all about . . . "

Students varied in their responses to these instructions. Quantitatively, most students recorded one or more entries at each of the three grade levels, but some reported that they could not remember any particular activity from one or more levels. A smaller minority reported several activities for each level. Qualitatively, the students differed considerably in the specificity and detail with which they reported both the activities themselves and what they learned from engaging in these activities. Generally, however, the students were clearer in describing the activities than in describing the learning. Frequently, instead of articulating one or more specific conclusions or insights that they acquired from participating in an activity, students merely said that they "learned a lot about --- " or "learned all about ---."

The following examples indicate the nature and range of the responses. The first is from a student who apparently experienced a relatively barren social studies curriculum:

Grades	Powerful/Memorable Activity	Explanation of what you learned
K-3	(no memory)	
Fourth	We wrote letters to a specific state (Texas) and requested information about that state. When we got the information we wrote reports and drew the flag, flower, etc.	I learned how to write a formal letter, learned a great deal of facts about Texas and learned from other students' posters and reports.
Seventh	We used maps and grease pencils to learn geography, latitude and longitude.	I learned how to locate places by reading maps and using lines of latitude and longitude.
Seventh	For every chapter we had to read and outline it.	I learned to outline.
Eighth	We had to research a particular subject and write a report on it. My topic was the Holocaust.	I learned how to use the library and to find research materials and I learned a great deal about the Holocaust.

The following student's memories are typical in most respects, except that she reports a cultural unit rather than a first Thanksgiving activity at the K-3 level:

Grades	Powerful/Memorable Activity	Explanation of what you learned
First	We did a unit on the Hopi Indians. I remember that we did a little program for the parents because I got to be the narrator and had the most lines. I thought this was because I was the best reader.	I don't remember anything about the play or what I read. All I remember is that the Hopi did not live in tepees like I thought all Indians did at that time.

4-6	I can faintly remember doing a report on a European country. Each person chose a country and researched it, then turned in a written report and presented an oral report to the class.	I studied Belgium. I learned what flax was and that it was one of Belgium's main resources. I remember this because I drew a picture of it next to a Belgium river.
Seventh	By seventh grade I had a strong dislike for social studies and my teacher did not help one bit. All we did in his class was worksheets that were multiple choice.	(No statement of learning)
Seventh	At one point we did a report on a president. I chose Andrew Jackson just because I liked the name. We had to research the president and then write a research report.	I found out that Jackson wasn't that great of a guy after all. I didn't find out about any of the other presidents, though, because no one shared with the class the information that we gathered.

The following response was unusual, both in the nature of the activities reported and in the sophistication of the descriptions of learning:

Grades	Powerful/Memorable Activity	Explanation of what you learned
Third	A couple of hours each week was spent on what was called "Mini-society." The society consisted of mostly businesses and financial institutions such as a loan program and banking services. We had the opportunity to earn money and buy products and services from other businesses. My friend and I operated a potholder company. There was a candy store (which was the most popular), jewelry store, and services available. The system was built around	

	a fake money system and was basically a barter or exchange system.	We learned about the value of money, profit and loss in a business situation, how to work in a partnership, and banking issues such as loans.
Sixth	Our class was doing a unit on China and its history. While doing a report on the lives of Chinese women, one student told the class that women in China are only allowed to have one baby since they had an epidemic population crisis. We had a guest visitor too and ended up discussing what it would be like not being able to make decisions that greatly affected your life.	I learned more about democracy and what it really meant to be an American, because this guest speaker told us about her life and how lucky we were to be Americans.
Eighth	In government/history class, we had a debate about the Civil War. It was up to each student to decide which side they wanted to represent, fight for, and defend. Instead of just reading about another war in our textbook, the Civil War was brought to life. By studying the North, for example, one also was responsible for understanding the viewpoints of the South because it was a debate situation. Every time you made a good solid statement, a point was earned for your team.	It was a good opportunity to work together and think in terms of what it would be like to walk in another person's shoes. We also learned why the people felt the way they did and got a deeper understanding for the reasons and causes behind the war.

The following student also reported unusually rich activities and learning outcomes:

Grades	Powerful/Memorable Activity	Explanation of what you learned
Third	We learned about economics by dividing into groups and "selling" supplies. Each group of sellers were also purchasers. Each buyer was given a different amount of money to simulate different income levels. Groups would set prices based on the competition. In the end, results were recorded and the class discovered how high and low prices and purchasing power had affected obtaining supplies.	Through this activity I learned how prices are set (competition), how high and low prices affect the supply of the seller and the demand of the buyer, and how income level affects what and how much a person can buy.
4-6	Create a country: We were required (at year end) to integrate what we had learned about government, monetary systems, cultures, and geography to create our own country with currency, government, etc. All had to be workable but could be unique.	This project taught me how interrelated and complex the components of society are. For example, geography determines climate and growing conditions. This in turn affects imports and exports, which then affect the economy.
Eighth	We viewed several movies on Nazi Germany and their treatment of Jews. Each movie was very graphic, portraying the true horrors. We then had to write about the impact we thought these atrocities had on history and the Jewish community.	I learned that history is not just past events' determiners and predictors of the future. I remember experiencing social studies emotionally and not just intellectually. This made learning history a completely different experience.

Response Coding

The responses were coded by the authors in four stages. First, we went through the responses together to determine which ones would be considered relevant and which would not (a few responses were excluded because they had

nothing to do with social studies or in some other way were not relevant to the purposes of this investigation). At this time, we also numbered each response (when multiple responses were given for one or more grade levels) and refined our initial ideas about appropriate coding categories. Next, we developed the initial version of the coding system and used it to code a sample of 10 cases, then discussed our independent coding and revised the system. Next, we adjusted our coding of the first 10 cases to reflect the revised coding system and used that system to code the remaining cases independently. Finally, we discussed our coding of these cases and negotiated agreement on final codes. The coding categories were as follows.

Content domains. For each activity reported, we first coded the content domain with which the activity was associated. Content domains were coded into the following categories: unknown, history, physical geography/map and globe studies, cultural studies/anthropology, government/civics, economics, sociology/communities, psychology/self-concept, social issues/policy debates, current events, studies of states, studies of nations, and other. Most of these categories reflect the academic disciplines that underlie social studies. The others reflect common social studies activities (discussions of social issues or current events, research reports on states or nations) that cut across disciplines. Ordinarily only a single content domain code was assigned, but a few activities received double codes (as when an activity involved both physical geography/map and globe aspects and cultural studies/anthropology aspects).

Activity types. The activities themselves were coded into the following types: multiple (a curriculum unit or a set of several related activities), receiving information (from the teacher, a resource person, or a media presentation), seatwork (reading and answering questions from the text, filling out dittos or worksheets), research (leading to an oral or written report),

construction (of dioramas, displays, models, or artistic products), field trips, discussion/debate, role enactment (pageants, dramatic reenactments of historical events, imitations of cultural practices, or other role playing that involved following scripts or imitating models), realistic simulations and applications (that required students to solve problems or make decisions rather than just follow a script or imitate a model), and other (including singing, eating cultural foods, and engaging in patriotic activities). Again, most activities were assigned a single code, but multiple codes were possible when the activity included two or more categories (as when preparation of a report on a state or country involved not only summarizing one's research findings but also illustrating the report with maps, drawings, photo montages, or other constructions).

Learning outcomes. Learning outcomes were coded for cognitive learnings, skill learnings, affective outcomes, and negative assessments of the value of the activity. Cognitive learnings were coded at one of four levels: 0 = no cognitive learnings reported; 1 = vague or uninformative; 2 = specifies particular aspects of what was learned; and 3 = specifies a significant conclusion or insight that reflects social studies purposes and goals. Responses were coded "1" if the response was confined to a vague generality (I learned all about Tennessee) or to a statement that was uninformative because it did not add anything beyond what would be inferred from the description of the learning activity itself (from the activity of memorizing the states and capitals, the person "learned the states and capitals"). Statements were coded "2" if the person stated specific aspects of what was learned but did not include a significant insight or conclusion (I learned the state capital, the state bird, and the state flower). Finally, statements were coded "3" if the person stated

a general conclusion or insight (I learned that Tennessee includes three distinct geographical regions with different climates and economies.).

Skill learning was coded if the person reported one or more skill learning outcomes. These were differentiated into social studies skills (making maps, using maps or globes, cooperating with others in groups) and more generic skills that were not unique to social studies (learning to use the library, to outline, or to prepare a report).

Affective outcomes were coded into four categories (fun/enjoyment, interest in the topic, empathy with people, and other). Fun/enjoyment was coded if the person reported that the activity was fun or enjoyable. Interest in the topic was coded when respondents reported that they remembered an activity because they found the topic fascinating or because the activity initiated a lifelong interest in the topic. Empathy with people was coded if respondents reported that the activity enabled them to empathize with the people being studied or to put themselves in their places and see things from their points of view. Empathy with people was often coded for historical activities that "made the period come alive for me" or for cultural experiences that "helped me to appreciate Japanese culture" or "helped me to understand how the Japanese think and feel." Finally, the "other" category was used for affective outcomes that did not fit one of the other three categories. Most of these were idiosyncratic personal responses to activities ("I was excited to discover that I could give a presentation before the group," or "I took pride in the fact that I had done all of this on my own").

Negative assessments were coded when respondents stated that they remembered the activity because it was a bad one rather than a good one. Some of these comments disparaged the content base of the activity (I didn't see the point of requiring students to learn about state birds). However, most of them

criticized the activity itself, usually activities coded as seatwork (It was the same old thing day after day; we memorized stuff for tests and then promptly forgot it.).

Supplementary categories. In addition to the three general sets of categories focusing on content domains, activity types, and learning outcomes, there was a set of supplementary codes that addressed qualitative aspects of the activities. These categories were as follows:

Cooperative learning: Did the activity call for students to work in pairs or small groups to cooperate to complete its requirements?

Game or contest: Did the activity involve Jeopardy or some other game or contest played by competing teams?

History focus: If the activity was related to the content domain of history, did it focus on people (particular individuals or groups such as the Pilgrims), events (wars, discoveries), or other/generic aspects (described only as "history" or "American history")?

Reaction report: For activities that involved getting input from a teacher, a resource person, a media presentation, or a field trip, did the respondent also report a post-activity discussion or written report requirement?

Song: Did the activity include singing songs?

Food: Did the activity include eating?

Visual presentation: If the activity involved information presentation, did the presentation include physical artifacts, photographs, film or videotape, or some other visual input to supplement the verbal message?

Coder Agreement

With one exception, comparisons of our independent codings showed high to very high agreement, ranging from 70 percent for the content domain categories up to 99 percent for coding of a game or contest. The exception was the coding of learning outcomes, which yielded a more moderate figure of 53 percent agreement (agreement percentages were computed by dividing the number of agreed-upon codes by itself plus the number of cases where both coders coded

but disagreed plus the number of cases where one coder coded something and the other did not).

The brevity and frequent vagueness of the responses made certain aspects of the coding of learning outcomes difficult. In coding cognitive learnings, it often was difficult to distinguish a "1" from a "2" or, to a lesser extent, to distinguish a "2" from a "3." Some seemingly positive statements (I learned a whole lot about Tennessee) nevertheless had to be coded "1" if there was no further elaboration. Sometimes, however, credit for a "2" response could be given if the description of the activity itself provided some indication that the respondent's claim to have learned "a lot" was realistic (e.g., the description indicated that the respondent had spent several weeks preparing the report on Tennessee and had included attention to its physical geography, history, economics, and tourist attractions). Conversely, there was a temptation to code "1" for relatively unimpressive statements of learning (I learned the state bird and the state flower), but these nevertheless were supposed to be coded "2" because they identified specific aspects of what was learned. At the other extreme, some respondents included a noteworthy list of things that they had learned, but nevertheless were supposed to be coded "2" instead of "3" because this list was confined to particular aspects of learning without including a statement of a significant insight or conclusion related to important social studies goals.

In resolving our disagreements on initial codings of cognitive learnings, we stuck with the operational definitions for each coding category (as described previously). Thus, we assigned final codes on the basis of what the respondent specifically said and not on the basis of our inferences about the nature and degree of learning that lay behind those responses.

The other major source of difficulty in coding learning outcomes involved deciding whether or not to code affective outcomes and negative assessments. Sometimes these statements were clear-cut, but at other times the coding was more questionable. Should "the field trip made history concrete for me in a way that the textbook could not" be coded as an affective outcome involving empathy with people? Should "I am afraid that nothing I learned from this activity at the time has stuck with me" be coded as a negative assessment of the value of the activity (or is the respondent saying that the activity was effective but he or she is at fault for not retaining the learning)? Again, we emphasized the operational definitions of the coding categories in resolving these disagreements. Respondents were not coded for "empathy with people" affective outcomes if they merely noted that a field trip or hands-on learning experience provided something that the text did not, and they were not coded for negative assessments of an activity unless they stated directly that they considered the activity worthless or counterproductive.

Findings

Our presentation of findings considers both general trends observed across the sample of 111 students as a whole and qualitative aspects of particular subsets of data that are likely to be of most interest to social studies educators. Our primary emphasis is on relationships between other variables and the ratings of learning outcomes.

Grade Level Trends

Table 1 shows the number of activities reported by the 111 students for each of the three grade levels. Collectively, the students reported 134 activities for Grades K-3, 153 activities for Grades 4-6, and 137 activities

for Grades 7-8. Only four respondents could not remember any activities from the middle grades, compared to 13 from Grades 7-8 and 20 from Grades K-3.

We expected students to have the most memories from Grades 7-8, but they had the most from Grades 4-6. Inspection of the responses suggested that the high frequency of memories from Grades 4-6 was due in part to use of the unit approach in these grades, in which students engage in sustained study of a topic over several days or weeks. Also, for many of the respondents, social studies in Grades 7 and 8 involved little or nothing more than reading the text, answering end-of-chapter questions, and filling out worksheets.

Table 2 shows the content domains associated with the activities (grade level totals in this and subsequent tables are higher than the totals in Table 1 due to occasional coding of more than one category for a particular remembered activity). The grade level differences shown in Table 2 reflect the predominance of the expanding communities scope and sequence as the de facto national curriculum in elementary social studies (Naylor & Diem, 1987). Sociology/communities content is primarily associated with the early grades, geography and states/nations studies with the middle grades, government with the middle and upper grades, and history with the upper grades. Perhaps the biggest surprise, in view of claims by Ravitch (1987) and others that the expanding communities curriculum had replaced the history traditionally taught in the primary grades with sociology/community content, was the fact that the students remembered 46 historical activities but only 24 sociology/communities activities from the primary grades.

These data concern memories of salient activities, not estimates of time devoted to various content domains, so it may be that the pattern observed in the primary grades exists because the historical activities conducted in those grades are more memorable, rather than more numerous, than the

sociology/communities activities. Still, the data suggest that history remained an important part of even the primary grades portion of the expanding communities curriculum.

If there is cause for concern in the primary grades data, it lies with the teaching about self, family, neighborhoods, and communities. Given the emphasis on these topics in textbooks, it is surprising that the respondents remembered only five activities dealing with self-concept and only 24 dealing with family, neighborhood, communities, or other sociological content. Three possible (and mostly compatible) interpretations for this are that (1) the content base for these self-concept and sociology/communities activities really is as trite as its critics contend; (2) the activities commonly used for developing this content are not very effective (or at least, not very memorable); and (3) most primary grade teachers do not place as much emphasis on this content and related activities as the textbook series do.

Table 3 shows the frequencies of the different activity types. The grade-level trends generally reflect traditional wisdom about the teaching and learning needs of students at different grade levels. Hands-on activities are commonly remembered from the primary grades, especially pageants/role enactments, field trips, and construction of models. Research and construction activities are remembered most frequently in the middle grades, followed by seatwork and lectures/presentations. The construction activities coded for the middle grades tended to be maps, photo montages, or other illustrations to accompany reports prepared about states or nations, whereas in the primary grades these constructions were more likely to be papier mache globes or dioramas of neighborhoods or villages. Seatwork was the most frequently remembered activity in Grades 7 and 8, followed by research and lectures/presentations.

Students tended to remember special events (field trips; elaborate construction projects, pageants, or simulations) more clearly than everyday lecture/presentation or seatwork activities. The raw data illustrated this point even more strongly than the totals shown in Table 3, because many of the students who reported lecture/presentation or seatwork activities noted that these were the only kinds of activities that they experienced at certain grade levels (especially Grades 7 and 8), so that there was nothing else that they could have reported. The data for Grades 7-8 provide cause for concern, not only because the students reported such a heavy emphasis on seatwork but also because they reported relatively few memories of learning through discussion/debate activities or simulations. Despite their possession of a much broader knowledge base and much richer repertoires of learning-to-learn skills than younger students possess, many seventh and eighth graders apparently are being limited to impoverished social studies curricula that focus heavily on textbooks and associated worksheets.

Table 4 shows the frequencies for learning outcomes. Looking first at the cognitive learning outcomes, we were surprised to find that the ratings were highest for Grades K-3, even though the respondents had to reach further back into their memories to describe K-3 activities and even though they were less sophisticated learners in K-3 than in higher grades. The respondents were less likely to fail to report cognitive learning or to report it only vaguely when discussing their K-3 activities than when discussing their 4-6 or 7-8 activities. In addition, they were more likely to be coded for stating a significant insight or conclusion attained through participating in those K-3 activities.

The respondents were less likely to mention skill learning outcomes in reporting K-3 activities than 4-6 or 7-8 activities, although neither skill learning category was coded for more than 10 percent of the activities reported

at any level. The respondents mentioned affective outcomes only about 20 percent of the time. When they did, it was usually to say that the activity had stimulated their interest in the topic, helped them to develop empathy with the people being studied, or had some idiosyncratic personal meaning to them as individuals, not merely to say that they enjoyed the activity because it was fun. The most frequently mentioned affective outcome was empathy with people, which was coded for 11 percent of the K-3 activities, 12 percent of the 4-6 activities, and 17 percent of the 7-8 activities.

Negative assessments of the worth of activities occurred for four percent of the K-3 activities, 10 percent of the 4-6 activities, and 11 percent of the 7-8 activities. It is not accidental that these figures parallel the (somewhat larger) frequencies of seatwork activities remembered at the three grade levels.

Table 5 shows the frequencies for the supplementary categories. These data indicate that cooperative learning was coded for just under 10 percent of the total activities reported (less often for the primary grades and more often for the other grades). Games and contests were never reported for the primary grades and were reported only four times for Grades 4-6 and only seven times for Grades 7-8. Most of these were Jeopardy games in which groups of students competed to answer questions based on material being studied for tests.

The history codes indicated that 49 history activities focused on individuals or particular groups of people, 17 focused on historical events, and 75 were reported more generically. Focus on people (especially Columbus and the Pilgrims) was especially likely to be coded in the primary grades and focus on events (especially wars) was especially likely to be coded in Grades 7-8.

Reaction reports following field trips or classroom visits by resource persons were coded only four times. We believe that these debriefing/ synthe-

sizing activities are important components of experiential learning, but they appear not to be emphasized much by teachers (at least, students did not report them often).

Songs were coded 18 times, 10 for the primary grades. Most of these codes were for singing patriotic songs or for singing the "50 Nifty United States" song as a way to learn the states.

Food was coded for 32 activities, 18 in the primary grades. Most of the codes from the primary grades were for recreations of the first Thanksgiving meal. Most from the other grades were for "cultural foods" activities or special days that included meals or food tasting.

Students mentioned visual presentations (film strips, videotapes, or lecture/presentations that included visual aids) 26 times, mostly in the middle and upper grades. Some of these were film strips or videotapes that recreated historical events or showed other nations or cultures. Others were presentations by the teacher (e.g., showing slides taken on vacations) or by resource people (typically parents who came to discuss and illustrate the customs of their countries of origin).

Relationships Between Content Domains and Activity Types

Cross tabulations of content domain codes with activity type codes are shown in Table 6. About one-third of the activity codes were associated with the content domain of history. Pageants or role enactments were the most frequently remembered historical activities (36), followed by field trips (28), research (24), lecture/presentations (22), construction of models or displays (18), and seatwork (16). About one-sixth of the activity codes were for geography, and these had a very different pattern from the history codes. Almost half (38) of the geography codes were for seatwork. The only other

category to be coded frequently was construction of models or displays (19), typically papier mache globes or dioramas illustrating land forms. Compared to the other content domains, geography instruction was focused more on seatwork and involved fewer opportunities for experiential learning or higher order applications. In contrast, some of the least frequently coded content domains (government, economics, sociology, public issues, current events) had high percentages of activities that afforded opportunities for experiential learning or for critical thinking, decision making, or other higher order applications.

Studies of states and nations often were embedded within thematic curriculum units. Also, they often were coded both for research and for construction of models or displays. Many students remembered preparing a report on a state or nation that included not only text but maps, photo montages, or other illustrations. Across all content domains, there were 32 activities coded for both research and construction of models or displays.

Most of the simulation activities occurred in connection with government or economics teaching. The governmental simulations typically involved mock elections or simulated judicial or legislative proceedings. The economics simulations involved implementing the Mini-Society curriculum (Kourilsky, 1983) or engaging in similar activities that called for students to produce, buy, and sell goods and services (often within a simulated community that was set up in the classroom at certain times).

Relationships Between Content Domains and Learning Outcomes

Cross tabulations of the content domain codes with the learning outcomes codes are given in Table 7. These data are not easily integrated because of the qualitatively different types of learning outcomes described, but certain general patterns are observable.

Using the codes for cognitive learnings, one can compare the percentages of the activities in each content domain that were coded for failure to mention any cognitive learning at all, for describing the learning only vaguely, for describing specific aspects of the learning, and for stating a noteworthy insight or conclusion. This kind of analysis indicates, unsurprisingly, that the ratings of cognitive learnings were least impressive when the content domain was unknown. This was because the "unknown" codes were for responses such as "I don't even remember the subjects we studied in those grades; all I remember is that we were constantly reading the book, answering questions, and doing worksheets." The 20 "unknown" codes were associated with 19 failures to state any cognitive learnings and one statement coded as vague. Furthermore, they were accompanied by 11 negative assessments of the value of these activities.

The data for the remaining content domain categories reveal patterns that would be expected from the previous section on relationships between content domains and types of activities. That is, the cognitive learnings ratings are least impressive for geography, somewhat more impressive for history, and most impressive for the content domains that were not coded very frequently. Only seven (9%) of geography activities were coded for statement of a significant insight or conclusion. In contrast, insights were coded for 34 (24%) of the history activities and for 82 (41%) of the activities in content domains other than unknown, history, and geography.

Skill learnings were coded for only small percentages of the activities reported in particular content domains, except for activities involving states or nations. This was because most of the latter activities involved doing research and putting together a report, sometimes as a group project. Many students who described such activities noted that, in addition to whatever they

learned about the state or nation they studied, they learned about collaboration with partners or fellow group members, about construction or use of maps, or (especially) about how to collect research information and synthesize it into a report.

The affective outcomes data indicate that most of the activities that were coded for creating interest in the topic or empathy for the people studied were concentrated in the domains of history, culture, and nation studies. The negative assessment codes were concentrated in the first three categories of unknown, history, and geography. Virtually all of these negative comments were directed at the activities involved (typically pointless memorizing and/or boring seatwork), not at the content domains.

Some of the trends detailed in Table 7 are summarized in Table 8, which contains percentage data relating the content domains to two combination measures of desirable learning outcomes (one for cognitive outcomes and one for affective outcomes) as well as to the main measure of undesirable outcomes (negative assessments of the value of an activity). In addition to trends commented on already, these data highlight the fact that the sociology activities and the geography activities (including studies of states) lacked affective impact on students, whereas activities coded as history, culture, or studies of nations produced the most frequent codings for interest in the topic or empathy with the people being studied. The contrasts in the findings for studies of states compared to studies of nations apparently occurred because the studies of states focused on enumerating boring and trite details (state flag, state bird, etc.), whereas the studies of nations focused on more interesting and significant historical and sociocultural content.

Relationships Between Activity Types and Learning Outcomes

Cross tabulations of the activity type codes with the learning outcomes codes are shown in Table 9, and summary information is given in Table 10. These data suggest that discussions and debates, while occurring least frequently among the activities included in the table, yielded the highest ratings of cognitive learnings. Relatively high ratings were also noted for curriculum units that included multiple activities and for realistic simulations and applications. Seatwork produced by far the lowest percentages of high cognitive learning scores and the highest percentages of negative assessments. Almost a third of the reports of seatwork activities were accompanied by negative assessments of their value.

Activities coded as research or as construction (or both) were associated with only modest learning outcome ratings. In part, this was because many students concentrated on discussing what they learned about the mechanics of doing research or about working in a group, rather than on cognitive learnings, when they described what they learned from research projects. Also, their responses suggested that the data sources used in research activities often were limited to encyclopedias and texts, and that construction activities sometimes became highly competitive affairs in which help from parents was solicited in constructing elaborate products that would elicit high grades.

In describing what they learned from researching states or nations, the students tended to list several aspects learned rather than to state a general insight or conclusion relating to important social studies goals. This may have been because these research projects were not focused around important social studies concepts or generalizations, but it also may have been because remembering and reporting such activities somehow focuses one's attention on

their procedural aspects or on the categories of information studied rather than on the larger insights derived from the activity.

Affective outcomes were generally coded in conjunction with 20-30 percent of the activities reported. However, this percentage reached or approached 50 percent for thematic units, discussions/debates, and pageants/role enactments, but only about six percent for seatwork. These percentages reflect what would be expected given the nature of the activities and the data already presented, although it might be considered surprising that affective outcomes were not mentioned more frequently for field trips and for simulations.

Cross-tabulations of the supplementary categories codes with the learning outcome codes are shown in Table 11, and summary information is given in Table 12. Cooperative learning was coded for 41 activities, or just short of 10 percent of the total. Our respondents completed the eighth grade at least eight years ago, prior to the recent heavy emphasis on cooperative learning, so that the percentage of cooperative learning activities included within their reports is probably lower than it would be in the reports of a younger cohort of students. Cooperative learning codes were associated with very positive patterns of learning outcomes codes, including high ratings of cognitive learnings, frequent codes for social studies skills learning (primarily skills for working in groups), and high percentages of desirable affective outcome codes. Only two instances of cooperative learning were associated with negative assessments. In one of these, the respondent remembered "getting into small groups to look at maps" but reported minimal learning because "one boy in the group knew all the answers so we copied off him."

Games and contests were seldom mentioned as memorable activities, and when they were, the ratings of cognitive learnings were generally low. Some students enjoyed the game format or were motivated to study the material carefully

to prepare for it, but essentially, these games and contests were just variations on the seatwork approach that called for memorizing disconnected information from the textbook. Perhaps this is why the respondents remembered only 11 instances of such games or contests, and none at all from the primary grades.

Separation of the history codes into those that focused on people, those that focused on events, and those that were reported generically as history without mention of specific people or events yielded some interesting contrasts. History activities that focused on individual people (or particular groups such as the Pilgrims) were associated with higher ratings of cognitive learnings, more frequent coding of empathy with the people being studied, and infrequent negative assessments. The opposite patterns were observed for history activities that focused on events and, especially, for activities merely reported as "history." The history activities coded for focus on people tended to be reenactments of the stories of Columbus or the Pilgrims in the early grades and research papers or other projects focused on famous individuals in the higher grades.

Reaction reports or discussions following field trips or visits to the classroom by resource people were reported only four times, not enough to establish a basis for confidence in drawing conclusions from the data. However, it is worth noting that these four reaction report codes were associated with a very positive pattern of learning outcomes codes.

Songs were recalled more frequently than we expected, but the learning outcomes associated with these memories were not especially impressive. In part, this was because many of the song codes were for singing the "Fifty Nifty United States" song which, although often experienced as enjoyable, was nothing more than a way of memorizing the states. Songs that were sung not as isolated

activities but as parts of larger thematic units (typically on cultures or nations) generally were associated with more positive outcome codes.

Activities involving making or sampling of food were mentioned with surprising frequency, especially in Grades K-3. Furthermore, they were associated with very positive outcome patterns, apparently because most of them (28 of 32) were parts of larger curriculum units on a country or culture. Students' comments suggested that these activities helped them to achieve cognitive understandings and develop appreciation for cultural diversity.

Visual presentations were not reported as frequently as we had anticipated. However, these 26 activities were associated with quite positive patterns of learning outcomes. Many of the most positively rated visual presentations were filmstrips, movies, or videotapes depicting historical or cultural content.

Inventory of "Best" Activities

To focus more closely on the activities that yielded the most positive outcome ratings, we inventoried the activities that either (1) were coded "3" for cognitive learning (whether or not this was accompanied by a code for affective outcomes), or (2) were coded a "2" for cognitive learning and also were coded for the affective outcomes of "interest" or "empathy." Of the total of 424 remembered activities, 138 met these "best activity" criteria. Simulations were involved in 24 of these activities: 8 Mini-Society or other economics simulations, 5 mock conventions or legislative debates, 2 mock trials, 2 mock elections, 2 "create your own nation" exercises, and 1 simulation each involving family budget planning, pretending to be a child coal miner and writing a letter to a relative, forming an assembly line to make sandwiches, acting as anthropologists by figuring out how artifacts (rock

tools) were used, and using information about countries' populations and resources in order to make decisions about where to live.

Twenty-one of these "best" activities involved field trips: 10 to historical museums and restorations, 3 to local sites (stores, police and fire stations, post office), 2 to Washington, D.C., and 1 each to Mexico, Philadelphia, the state capitol, an outdoor education center, a cider mill, and a train. Seventeen of the "best" codes were for curriculum units: 9 on other nations or Hawaii, 3 on archaeology, and 1 each on the Eskimos, the Cherokee, consumer education, Thanksgiving, and Hanukkah. Fifteen were research reports: 8 on nations or regions, 4 on historical topics, and 1 each on the state, on explorers, and on election-year voting blocs. Eleven involved reenactments or pageants: 4 of the first Thanksgiving and 1 each of the Civil War, Columbus, the Salem witch trials, the Boston Tea Party, a slave auction, a slave ship, and a pageant of nations).

Other "best" activities included six class visits by resource people (three fire and safety, three cultural show and tell), six construction projects (two detailed maps of the neighborhood or town, one model of the town, one diorama of an Indian village, one clay volcano, and one log cabin constructed from tongue depressors), six media experiences (three World War II videos, one World War II radio play, and viewings of Roots and Fiddler on the Roof), five career days, and five reports of spending the day in a restored one-room schoolhouse recreating 19th-century schooling. "Best" activities that appeared infrequently but more than once included four self and family activities (student-of-the-week display and presentation, show-and-tell about one's family, writing an autobiography, putting together an "All about Me" book), three current events discussions, two debates, two map and globe activities, two experiences in acting as classroom helpers, and two teacher

presentations (including one on local government by a teacher who was involved in that government as an office holder). Finally, there were single instances of reading the text and answering questions, taking notes (remembered because these were to be accompanied by stick-figure illustrations of concept webs), burying a time capsule, singing "This land is your land," tasting cultural foods, interviewing a relative about experiences in Vietnam, and doing Chinese brush paintings.

Given their relative frequencies among the total of 424 memories reported, high percentages of thematic units, simulations, discussions/debates, and field trips emerged as "best" activities. Moderately high percentages were seen for lectures/presentations, mostly due to memorable media presentations or visits by resource people. Low percentages of reported seatwork activities and construction projects emerged as "best" activities.

Comparisons of Subgroups of Students

Different subgroups of students were compared for the number of activities that they reported and for the percentages of these activities that were coded for desirable cognitive learning, desirable affective outcomes, or negative assessments of the value of the activity. The percentage scores were quite similar across subgroups but there were a few differences in the numbers of activities reported. Whereas the sample as a whole averaged 3.82 reported activities, students intending to teach at Grades 4-6 (N = 28) averaged 4.29 reported activities but students intended to teach at Grades K-3 (N = 49) averaged only 3.71. The activities recalled by these two groups were similarly distributed across the three grade levels, however. There was no tendency for students to report more memories from the grade levels at which they intended to teach than from other grade levels.

Taken together, the responses of the seven male students were similar to those of the 104 female students. Special education majors (N = 13) averaged only 3.62 activities reported, lower than the averages for elementary education majors. Perhaps unsurprisingly, social science majors (N = 13) had the highest subgroup score, averaging 4.54 activities reported.

We also asked two classes of graduate students enrolled in social studies methods courses to respond to the same questions. These students averaged only 3.38 remembered activities. Older students who completed elementary school 20 or more years ago had more difficulty remembering specific activities, especially for Grades K-3. Some of them said that they did not think that they had social studies in these grades, especially if they attended Catholic schools.

Qualitative Observations

Several qualitative aspects of the responses are worth noting to elaborate on the quantitative patterns summarized in the tables. Overall, both the response narratives and the ratings assigned to them were somewhat disappointing, if not particularly surprising. In view of periodic critical assessments of elementary social studies textbook series and the research findings of investigators such as Goodlad (1984) and Stodolsky (1988), we were not surprised at the frequent reports of seatwork assignments that did not appear to be closely connected to important social studies goals. However, we expected to see more frequent reports of activity types such as research, discussion, and simulation, especially at the upper grades.

Many students' responses suggested that they were more caught up in "doing school" than in goal-oriented learning. Such reports were especially prevalent in the content domain of geography, usually in connection with seatwork

activities such as memorizing the state capitals, learning the states in alphabetical order, writing out definitions, reading the text and answering questions, coloring maps, doing ditto sheets, or memorizing the locations of states and nations. Although many students who reported such activities criticized them as boring or pointless, a few appeared to be satisfied with them even though they were unable to articulate anything very substantive about what they had learned from them. They made outcomes statements such as "I learned this was an easy way to get an A," "We all stood in front of the class and named off all of the state capitals. I still remember 25 percent of them," and "I don't remember any of the flowers or birds but this was the first time that I learned to use a specific memory strategy." Students who spoke positively of repetitive, low-level seatwork activities tended to be those who had never experienced much else. "Reaching" to find meaning in these activities, they focused on their own strategies for memorizing or getting good grades rather than the content that the activities were ostensibly designed to develop.

Many respondents remembered the mechanics of doing the tasks involved in activities but had little grasp of major understandings acquired as a result. One said, "we had to draw a map. I learned how hard it was to figure out the spacing and how far I could draw from A to B." Another student, recalling viewing the movie The Diary of Anne Frank, described what was learned as "we had to write our own diary of how we'd feel with all that going on." Another indicated that state reports were memorable because "I learned how to use encyclopedias."

Many students had salient memories of visits to the class by resource people. These reports often included not only statements of substantive cognitive learning but noteworthy affective outcomes. For example, one respondent

mentioned that a local woman had come to the classroom dressed in Japanese ceremonial attire and demonstrated a tea ceremony. In describing what was learned, this respondent said that "this helped me gain an appreciation for their culture." Another indicated that visits by a policeman, a senator, and a representative were memorable because "this gave us an opportunity to see how the government works and checks each other."

Memories of field trips frequently yielded positive learning outcome ratings, and we suspect that this percentage would have been higher if more trips had been accompanied by preliminary structuring to set the stage and by debriefing upon return to the classroom. One respondent recalled going to the state capitol but learning nothing important because the legislators were not in session. Another recalled going to Greenfield Village but summarized the experience by saying only that "I don't remember very much. I do remember it rained." Another recalled a trip to Plymouth Plantation but said that nothing much was learned because "I'd been there before." In contrast, a student who remembered a trip to Greenfield Village noted that "before the trip, I thought inventions just happened." Another stated about a trip to Williamsburg that "I got a taste of what it was like to live in colonial times."

Role enactments accompanied by the wearing of costumes were not mentioned frequently but appeared to engender positive affective outcomes when they were. One respondent recalled reading a biography and delivering a report on a famous African American as follows: "We got to dress up like that person. It taught us to acknowledge these figures; they were real people who experienced life in a unique way." Another described researching and delivering a report on a president: "Each person in the class picked a president, researched him, and gave an oral report on him. Everybody dressed up as their chosen president. I learned a great deal about Thomas Jefferson--where he was born, raised, and his

accomplishments." Another student described a trip to Greenfield Village that involved spending most of the day in a one-room school: "We dressed up like children would have dressed in the 19th century and we had our lessons there as children would have learned back then. I learned that school back then was very different than school was for me."

Activities involving making and/or sampling foods appeared to enhance social studies understandings and foster appreciation for diversity. One respondent said, "I remember the parents coming in and discussing different cultures and making different foods. I learned about different cultures, customs, and about different types of foods." Another described the first Thanksgiving supper recreation as memorable: "Every grade was responsible for a portion of it. The kindergarten had to make butter from cream. We saw how much the Pilgrims depended upon the Indians and each other for their food; they all had to cooperate and pull together to survive."

Discussions and debates were seldom reported, but when they were, they yielded impressive patterns of outcome ratings (especially current events discussions, as opposed to discussion of events in the past). So did activities that were embedded within thematic units that allowed for sustained study of a substantial topic. From these activities, various students reported that they "learned differences between Japanese and English . . . learned that Japanese students wear uniforms, eat rice, read from right to left, and that the Japanese have a remarkable background in literature, art, and science," "doing this unit taught me another language other than English, that birthdays are celebrated differently by Mexican children, and that Mexican people eat different kinds of food," and "I learned aspects of the Hawaii culture, what they wear, their food and their climate--I learned there are many differences between people of different parts of the world."

Many of the most memorable simulations occurred in the K-3 and 4-6 grade levels. One respondent recalled the simulated school day at Greenfield Village and learning that "schools were much stricter and the materials were inefficient." Another recalled a classroom assembly line in which the students made sandwiches, and reported learning that "assembly lines build on each other to make a whole object made of parts." Another recalled an economics simulation that involved "learning to write and number checks, learning about profit, supply and demand, and the importance of making money."

Many of the reports on states or nations remembered from the middle grades produced little substantive cognitive learning. Apparently, this was because these reports had focused on activities such as looking up and listing the state birds and flowers or listing a nation's exports and imports without learning much about the reasons for these economic characteristics. Often these reports were remembered primarily because they were major individual assignments that involved learning how to conduct and report research, not because of what was learned about the topic studied. Social studies goals would be better served if these report assignments were structured with more emphasis on learning the more important aspects of states or nations and the geographical, historical, and economic reasons why these states or nations have the characteristics that they do.

There were some surprising comments about parental involvement in social studies projects. Most educators, including ourselves, tend to think of out-of-school learning opportunities as important supplements to the in-school curriculum. Consequently, we expected responses like that of a student who constructed a log cabin out of tongue depressors and learned that "I needed mom's help. It goes deeper, however. I learned that people used to live much differently than we are accustomed today." However, several of our respondents

noted that projects done at home ended up being overly competitive to the point that the focus was on getting a high grade rather than on learning what was supposed to be learned from engaging in the activity. Another student recalled making a castle but learning that "those who get mother's help on projects--and get away with it--get a better grade." Another described constructing Michigan buildings as memorable but stated learning that "everyone wanted his/hers to be the best, so it ended up that the parents did all the work. I learned that the project needed to be done in the classroom, if at all, if it was going to be fair."

Many students reported constructing products. Often these were maps, photo montages, or other illustrations to accompany reports on states or nations, but many were time-consuming construction activities such as building a pyramid, making a papier mache globe, making flags, creating a puzzle of the United States, and building a bridge. The time involved in some of these construction activities raises cost-effectiveness issues, especially because the learning outcomes codes associated with many of them were not impressive.

Higher outcome codes tended to be associated with construction that was reported in connection with research activities. Responses of this kind included preparing a report on a state accompanied by a display of maps, graphs, and photos; making a clay model of the state to accompany a report on it; researching a Native American tribe and making a diorama of one of their villages; and making a cut-out map of England and building a castle to accompany a report on English history.

Several aspects of construction projects provide cause for concern, or at least for thoughtful consideration. For example, should there be more emphasis on the authenticity of the materials used? Might misconceptions result when students construct igloos from sugar cubes or log cabins from tongue

depressors? Also, what does the construction add to the learning? Our impression is that these construction projects did not support progress toward important social studies goals unless they were shared with the class and the teacher helped the students to observe and appreciate key features that promoted understanding of the historical periods or cultures being studied.

A few activities raised issues of feasibility or cost effectiveness. One respondent remembered constructing models of land formations using cake and frosting. Another described painting the classroom floor blue in order to depict the ocean crossed by the Pilgrims but reported learning that "my tennis shoes turned blue."

Certain activities were missing or underrepresented among the memories reported, given their emphasis in social studies textbooks for teachers and students. We have noted that relatively few of the memories, even from K-3, focused on self, family, neighborhood, or community. Also, with the exception of Thanksgiving, there was little mention of activities done in connection with national or religious holidays. Biographies and other activities focused on famous Americans seemed underrepresented, as did career studies (which were being emphasized when most of our respondents were in elementary school). Only a few of the reported field trips were to local historical sites or community business and service settings, suggesting that either such trips are not very memorable to students or that schools are not very active in exploiting the local community as a living laboratory for social studies observations and applications. Fantasy elements were prominent only in a few writing assignments and in a mock trial of Goldilocks. Finally, no student reported experience with computerized learning or any other memory involving work with computers.

The range of grades at which particular activities appeared was sometimes surprisingly large. "All about Me" bookmaking activities were reported both for kindergarten and for Grade 5; what appeared to be very similar map- or model- construction activities were reported across K-7; and Mini-Society and other economics simulations appeared at several grade levels.

Several aspects of the findings reflect missed opportunities. We have already remarked on the infrequent mention of advance preparation or post-activity discussion or reaction reports following field trips, visits by resource people, or other exposures to special input. We have also noted that research reports often focused on trivia when they could have focused on powerful ideas and that the schools did not appear to be exploiting opportunities for worthwhile field trips in the local community. The low frequencies of simulation and discussion/debate activities should be mentioned here too, as well as the frequent failure to arrange for display and sharing with classmates of the findings of research or the products of construction activities. Finally, there is the poignant memory reported by a Native American student whose teacher not only failed to take note of her ancestry and capitalize on the teachable moment it provided when teaching about the first Thanksgiving, but also assigned her to the group who would make and wear paper hats and other Pilgrim clothing instead of the group that would make and wear necklaces and other Native American clothing.

We have noted that low-level, repetitive seatwork was mentioned frequently and often disparaged as boring or counterproductive. Two other negatively assessed activities are worth mentioning because although they did not appear frequently, they were singled out for particular criticism when they were reported. The first of these was memorizing and reciting (the Gettysburg Address, the states in alphabetical order, etc.). Students who mentioned these

memorizing activities usually did so contemptuously, pointing out that they no longer remembered much of what they had memorized. The other disparaged activity was taking turns reading aloud from the textbook in class. Rather than mere contempt, students who reported this activity usually described it with accompanying expressions of anger and resentment. In addition to sheer boredom, they mentioned the humiliation that this activity caused poor readers (either themselves or peers that they had to watch agonizing their way through the task). These students sometimes added that it made them "hate" social studies and/or the teacher.

Summary and Conclusion

In summary, we found that more memories were recalled from the middle grades but that the cognitive learning outcomes associated with these memories were most impressive for the early grades and least impressive for the upper grades. Learning outcome ratings related to activity types in the ways that would be expected from the literature on learning activities, with the least impressive ratings for seatwork focused on memorizing disconnected information and the most impressive ratings for activities that involved experiential learning and opportunities for critical thinking, decision making, and other higher order applications. Within the ranges observed, ratings were generally low for geography activities, moderate for history activities, and high for activities in the social science domains. However, this was due to the differential pattern of types of activities observed in the different domains, rather than to the domains themselves. Patterns involving the supplementary coding categories indicated that learning outcomes ratings were higher for history activities that focused on people than for history activities that focused on events or that were reported only as generic history; that activities involving

cooperative learning, reaction reports, food, or visual presentations tended to yield high learning outcome ratings; and that activities involving songs or games or contests yielded less impressive cognitive learnings although they tended to be enjoyed by the students.

The data suggest that role enactments, construction of models, field trips, and other forms of experiential learning can be effective means of developing significant social studies understandings, even in the early grades. However, it appears important for teachers to structure these activities around important social studies generalizations initially and to focus on these generalizations during the activities themselves and in subsequent debriefing sessions. Otherwise, students' attention may focus more on generic skill learnings or considerations such as competition for grades than on the social studies insights that the activities are ostensibly intended to develop.

The junior high years provide the most cause for concern. The primary grades featured a great deal of experiential learning and the middle grades featured thematic units that included sustained focus on topics using a variety of learning opportunities, but Grades 7 and 8 too often featured little or nothing other than reading the text, answering questions, and filling out worksheets. The apparent frequency of such a barren social studies curriculum in these grades is unfortunate, doubly so because the students are now ready to benefit from even more complex and diverse learning experiences than younger students are.

Overall, we were encouraged by many positive aspects of these responses but concerned by the relative dearth of major social studies understandings articulated and by the major time investments involved in activities that yielded limited learning outcomes (especially, time-consuming construction projects). After all, what makes a social studies activity worthwhile in the

long run is not just that it is memorable but that it has led to important learnings. As we continue to interview social studies educators and students about their classroom activities, we will continue to listen carefully for statements of learning outcomes. We believe that there is a great deal of room for improvement here and that it can be accomplished primarily by placing more emphasis on selecting learning activities with major social studies goals in mind, emphasizing these goals when structuring and scaffolding the activities for the students, and reemphasizing them in post- activity debriefing exercises.

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Table 1. Numbers of Activities Reported for Each of Three Grade Levels by 111 Respondents

Grade Levels	Numbers of Activities Reported							
	None	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average
K-3	20	63	17	8	2	1	134	1.21
4-6	4	75	20	10	2	0	153	1.38
7-8	13	67	23	8	0	0	137	1.23
							424	3.82

Table 2. Content Domains of Reported Activities by Grade Level

Content Domain	Actual Numbers				Percentages			
	K-3	4-6	7-8	Total	K-3	4-6	7-8	Total
Unknown	5	8	7	20	4	5	5	5
History	46	35	58	139	34	22	41	32
Geography	19	36	22	77	14	23	15	18
Culture	13	19	10	42	10	12	7	10
Government	0	12	14	26	0	8	10	6
Economics	7	7	4	18	5	4	3	4
Sociology	24	4	2	30	18	3	1	7
Self	5	1	1	7	4	1	1	2
Public Issues	0	0	5	5	0	0	3	1
Current Events	1	1	6	8	1	1	4	2
States	4	16	2	22	3	10	1	5
Nations	5	16	9	30	4	10	6	7
Other	7	4	3	14	5	3	2	3
	136	159	143	438	102	102	99	102

Table 3. Activity Types Reported by Grade Level

Activity Types	Actual Numbers				Percentages			
	K-3	4-6	7-8	Total	K-3	4-6	7-8	Total
Thematic units	9	8	1	18	6	4	<1	4
Lecture/Presentation	13	22	23	58	9	12	14	12
Seatwork	12	28	37	77	8	16	23	16
Research	11	37	30	78	8	21	19	16
Model/construction	23	38	18	79	16	21	11	16
Field trip	23	15	13	51	16	8	8	11
Discussion/debate	1	2	9	12	1	1	6	2
Pageant/Role Enactment	28	8	8	44	20	4	5	9
Simulation	8	14	15	37	6	8	9	8
Other	14	8	5	27	10	4	3	6
	142	180	159	481	100	99	99	100

Table 4. Reported Learning Outcomes by Grade Level

Learning Outcomes	Numbers K-3	4-6	7-8	Total	Percentages[1] K-3	4-6	7-8	Total
Cognitive Learning								
No learning reported	13	22	21	56	7 (10)	10 (14)	10 (15)	9 (13)
Reports skills or affective learning, but not cognitive	5	10	14	29	3 (4)	4 (7)	7 (10)	5 (7)
Vague, uninformative statement	14	21	20	54	8 (10)	9 (13)	9 (14)	9 (13)
States specific aspects of what was learned	57	65	48	170	31 (43)	29 (42)	22 (35)	27 (40)
States significant insight	45	36	34	115	24 (34)	16 (24)	16 (25)	18 (27)
	134	153	137	424	(101)	(100)	(100)	(100)
Skill Learning								
Social studies skills	6	12	14	32	3 (4)	5 (8)	7 (10)	5 (8)
Other skills	3	15	13	31	2 (2)	7 (10)	6 (9)	5 (7)
Affective Outcomes								
Fun, enjoyment	5	7	5	17	3 (4)	3 (5)	2 (4)	3 (4)
Interest in topic	7	4	5	16	4 (5)	2 (3)	2 (4)	3 (4)

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Table 4 (cont'd.)

Learning Outcomes	Numbers K-3	4-6	7-8	Total	Percentages[1] K-3	4-6	7-8	Total
Empathy with people	15	18	23	56	9 (11)	9 (12)	11 (17)	9 (13)
Other	10	4	3	17	5 (7)	2 (3)	1 (2)	3 (4)
Negative Assessments								
Worthless/counter-productive	6	15	15	36	3 (4)	7 (10)	7 (11)	6 (8)
	186	228	215	629	101	102	100	102

[1] The percentages in the first column are for the total number of learning outcome codes made at each grade level. The percentages in the second column (in parentheses) are for the total number of activities reported at each grade level. There were more outcome codes than activities because all activities received a code for cognitive learning and many also received one or more codes for skills learning, affective outcomes, or negative assessments.

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Table 5. Frequencies of Supplementary Codes at Each Grade Level

Supplementary Categories	K-3	4-6	7-8	Total	% of 424 Activities
Cooperative Learning	9	17	15	41	10
Games/contests	0	4	7	11	3
History: Focus on people	26	10	13	49	12
History: Focus on events	4	2	11	17	4
History: Other	17	23	35	75	18
Reaction reports	0	3	1	4	1
Songs	10	4	4	18	4
Food	18	10	4	32	8
Visual presentation	5	9	12	26	6

Table 6. Cross-Tabulation of Content Domain Codes and Activity Type Codes

Activity Types / Content Domains	Units	Lecture	Seatwork	Research	Construct	Field Trip	Discussion/ Debate	Role Play	Simulate	Other	Row Totals
Unknown	0	4	16	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	21
History	1	22	16	24	18	28	4	36	6	4	159
Geography	0	5	38	5	19	4	0	2	1	6	80
Culture	4	13	2	4	10	3	1	2	3	5	47
Government	1	2	1	1	0	7	3	2	13	0	30
Economics	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	14	0	19
Sociology	0	9	0	0	6	11	0	1	2	2	31
Self	0	0	1	1	4	1	0	0	0	2	9
Public Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	3	0	7
Current Events	0	0	3	2	1	0	3	0	0	0	9
States	3	0	0	17	11	0	0	0	0	0	31
Nations	8	2	0	20	9	0	0	0	0	0	39
Other	0	0	0	2	5	1	0	0	0	8	16
Column Totals	18	57	77	78	84	55	14	46	42	27	498

Table 7. Cross-Tabulation of Content Domains with Learning Outcomes Codes

	Cognitive Learnings				Skill Learnings		Affective Outcomes				
Content Domains	None	Vague	Aspects	Insights	Social Studies	Other	Fun	Interest	Empathy	Other	Negative Assessments
Unknown	19	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	11
History	25	18	62	34	10	8	6	8	36	2	10
Geography	19	15	35	7	7	6	2	1	1	5	10
Culture	2	4	22	14	2	1	2	4	8	1	1
Government	3	3	8	12	0	0	1	0	4	0	0
Economics	1	2	5	10	3	1	1	0	1	0	1
Sociology	1	3	8	18	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Self	1	0	2	4	0	0	0	1	0	2	0
Public Issues	1	0	0	4	1	0	1	0	1	1	0
Current Events	2	2	1	3	0	2	0	0	1	1	0
States	3	3	14	2	4	7	1	0	0	1	1
Nations	3	3	14	10	3	5	2	2	7	1	0
Other	2	2	5	5	3	1	1	0	0	2	1

Table 8. Percentages of Content Domain Codes That Coincided With High Cognitive Learning Codes, Desirable Affective Outcomes, and Negative Assessments

Content Domains	% High Cognitive Outcomes (Specific Aspects, Insights)	% Desirable Affect (Interest, Empathy)	% Negative Assessments
Unknown	0	0	55
History	69	32	7
Geography	55	3	13
Culture	86	29	2
Government	77	15	0
Economics	83	6	6
Sociology	60	0	0
Self	57	14	0
Public Issues	80	20	0
Current Events	50	13	0
States	73	0	5
Nations	80	30	0
Other	71	0	7

Table 9. Cross-Tabulation of Activity Type Codes with Learning Outcomes Codes

	Cognitive Learnings				Skill Learnings		Affective Outcomes				
Activity Types	None	Vague	Aspects	Insights	Social Studies	Other	Fun	Interest	Empathy	Other	Negative Assessments
Thematic units	1	1	8	8	0	0	1	4	4	0	0
Lecture/presentation	8	3	26	19	2	1	2	2	11	0	4
Seatwork	41	16	18	2	4	8	1	0	1	2	24
Research	15	9	38	16	12	17	4	3	8	6	3
Construction	8	11	43	17	13	16	4	4	5	6	3
Field Trip	5	5	25	16	0	0	0	1	11	0	0
Discussion/debate	0	1	3	8	1	0	1	1	4	0	0
Pageant/Role enactment	2	8	21	13	5	1	3	2	12	3	0
Simulation	5	2	11	19	5	2	2	0	8	1	1
Other	7	5	5	10	1	1	2	2	1	2	2

Table 10. Percentages of Activity Type Codes That Coincided With High Cognitive Learning Codes, Desirable Affective Outcomes, and Negative Assessments

Content Domains	% High Cognitive Outcomes (Specific Aspects, Insights)	% Desirable Affect (Interest, Empathy)	% Negative Assessments
Thematic Units	89	44	0
Lecture/Presentation	80	23	7
Seatwork	26	1	31
Research	69	14	4
Construction	76	11	4
Field Trip	80	24	0
Discussion/Debate	92	42	0
Pageant/Role Enactment	77	32	0
Simulation	81	22	3
Other	56	11	7

Table 11. Cross-Tabulation of Supplementary Categories Codes with Learning Outcomes Codes

	Cognitive Learnings				Skill Learnings		Affective Outcomes				
Activity Types	None	Vague	Aspects	Insights	Social Studies	Other	Fun	Interest	Empathy	Other	Negative Assessments
Cooperative learning	5	2	17	17	18	2	3	2	9	0	2
Games, contests	2	4	4	1	0	2	1	0	1	1	0
History: focus on people	4	5	25	15	3	5	1	3	21	1	1
History: focus on events	5	3	4	5	4	1	0	1	4	0	2
History: Other	18	9	33	15	3	3	5	4	11	1	7
Reaction reports	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Songs	5	4	7	2	0	1	3	2	1	0	1
Food	1	3	13	15	4	1	2	1	6	0	0
Visual presentation	2	1	12	11	1	0	2	4	5	0	1

Table 12. Percentages of Supplementary Codes That Coincided With High Cognitive Learning Codes, Desirable Affective Outcomes Codes, and Negative Assessments

Supplementary Codes	% High Cognitive Outcomes (Specific Aspects, Insights)	% Desirable Affect (Interest, Empathy)	% Negative Assessments
Cooperative Learning	83	27	5
Games/Contests	45	9	0
History: Focus on people	82	49	2
History: Focus on events	53	29	12
History: Other	64	20	9
Reaction Reports	100	50	0
Songs	50	28	6
Food	88	22	0
Visual Presentations	88	35	4